

City of Alexandria Strategic Planning

Goal 1: There is Quality Development and Redevelopment, Support for Local Businesses, and a Strong, Diverse and Growing Local Economy

Public Comment

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Comment: While quality development and redevelopment are clear goals for the City of Alexandria, it is important to note the interrelationship between the attainment of these goals and the diminishment of Alexandria as an affordable and diverse community. Redevelopment comes at the expense of affordable housing. During the 2000s, Alexandria has lost nearly 10,000 units of affordable rental housing. Units that were once affordable to rent have either been redeveloped into condominiums or no longer have affordable rents.

It is therefore critical to look at the impact on affordability and diversity as a part of the development review process. There is a linkage between new residential development and suggested contributions to the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The amount of these contributions is not indexed to inflation and therefore needs to be periodically adjusted. Further, as the City continues to redevelop into a more and more expensive jurisdiction, greater contributions are necessary to preserve the affordability of what remains, and to create new affordable housing opportunities.

The linkage is even stronger between non-residential development and the impact on the affordable housing stock. More jobs attract more people to live in Alexandria and bid up the price of housing, whether for sale or for rent. Contributions to the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund are currently entirely voluntary on the part of non-residential development. While there are legal issues in making these contributions mandatory, the clear linkage between non-residential development and the impact on the affordable housing stock compels revisiting this issue.

At the end of the day, Alexandria must balance its quality development with its historic commitment to affordability and diversity. One way to adjust this balance is to increase the density of development in areas well served by transit and use this increase in density to fund significant affordable housing opportunities.